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International Terrorism

Current Situation and Trends

State sponsorship of international terrorism remains a persistent problem, despite efforts by such states--notably Afghanistan, Iran, and Libya--to hide their role by use of surrogate groups. Incidents that we are able to attribute to State sponsorship rose more than 60 percent from 1986 to 1987. 1988 figures suggest the pattern will continue.

The Abu Nidal organization, a radical Palestinian terrorist group, has expanded its activities out of its traditional areas of operation--Europe and the Middle East. This year it has been implicated in attacks against Western interests in Bombay, Khartoum, Athens, and three ANO operatives were recently arrested in Lima where they had been casing the US embassy.

Libyan and Iranian agents have been actively seeking to influence Muslim communities in Asia and the Pacific with the objective of recruiting supporters and building infrastructures to support terrorist operations. Enhanced security awareness and counterterrorism measures in the West have caused terrorists to look to Asia and Africa as less hostile environments for their activities.

P'Yongyang's public threats against the 1988 Seoul Olympics and its sabotage of a South Korean airliner last November clearly point to North Korea as the greatest challenge to the security of the Games. Several other groups have the capability and perhaps the motivation to stage a terrorist incident in Seoul--including the Japanese Red Army, Palestinian groups, and terrorist organizations with ties to Iran.

Nine US citizens and an Indian national with resident alien status are being held hostage, probably in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, by members of the radical Shia group Hizballah. We believe Iran has considerable influence over, but does not control, the actions of Hizballah on hostage issues.

Threats From New Quarters

Japanese Red Army members have been linked to attacks against US interests during the past three years, including the recent car bombing at the USO club in Naples. The JRA has links to Libya, North Korea, and several terrorist groups and may be acting with assistance or guidance from them.

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The Revolutionary Organization 17 November, a virulently anti-US Greek group has accelerated its terrorist campaign, conducting four operations against US targets since April 1987--most recently the assassination of US defense attache William Nordeen. The group is opposed to US presence and influence in Greece.

Attachments

Pie charts showing 1987 and 1988 figures.

- 1 International Terrorist Attacks by Region (percentages)
- 2 International Terrorist Attacks by Target (percentages)
- 3 International Terrorist Attacks by Victim (percentages)
- 4 Anti-US Attacks by Region

Future Concerns

Although terrorists have demonstrated a preference for traditional tactics--bombings, armed assault, arson, and kidnaping--they may in the future include chemical and biological agents in their inventories. High technology weapons are increasingly available to terrorists through the grey arms market; they afford greater precision, range, and lethality for attacking targets now hardened against traditional terrorist attacks.

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied